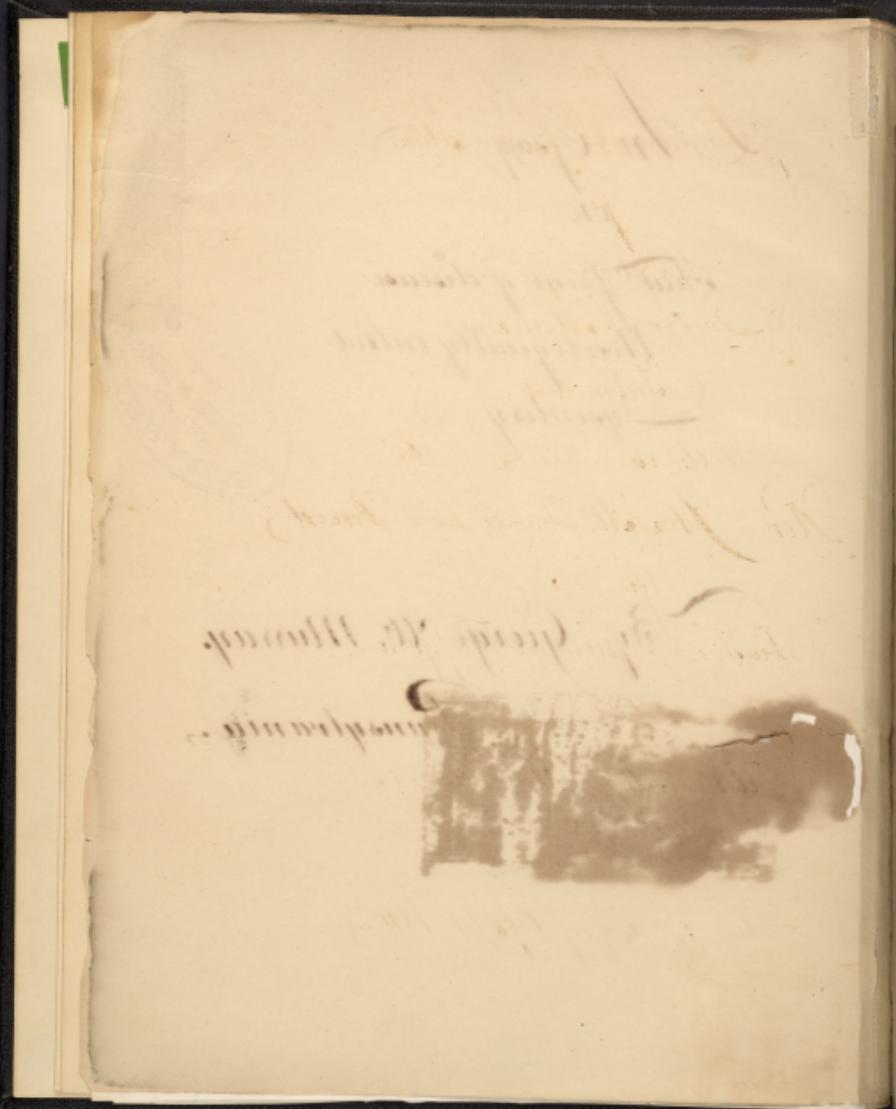


An Essay
on
Dysentery
3 vols

That form of disease
Morphologically called
Dysentery



By George W. Murray.
of Pennsylvania.



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#1

Inaugural Dissertation

for

the degree of

Doctor of Medicine

Submitted

to the examination of the

Rev. Dr. John W. Dowell LL.D. Provost

the

Trustees and Medical Professors

of the

University of Pennsylvania.

and

the 19th day of April, 1810.

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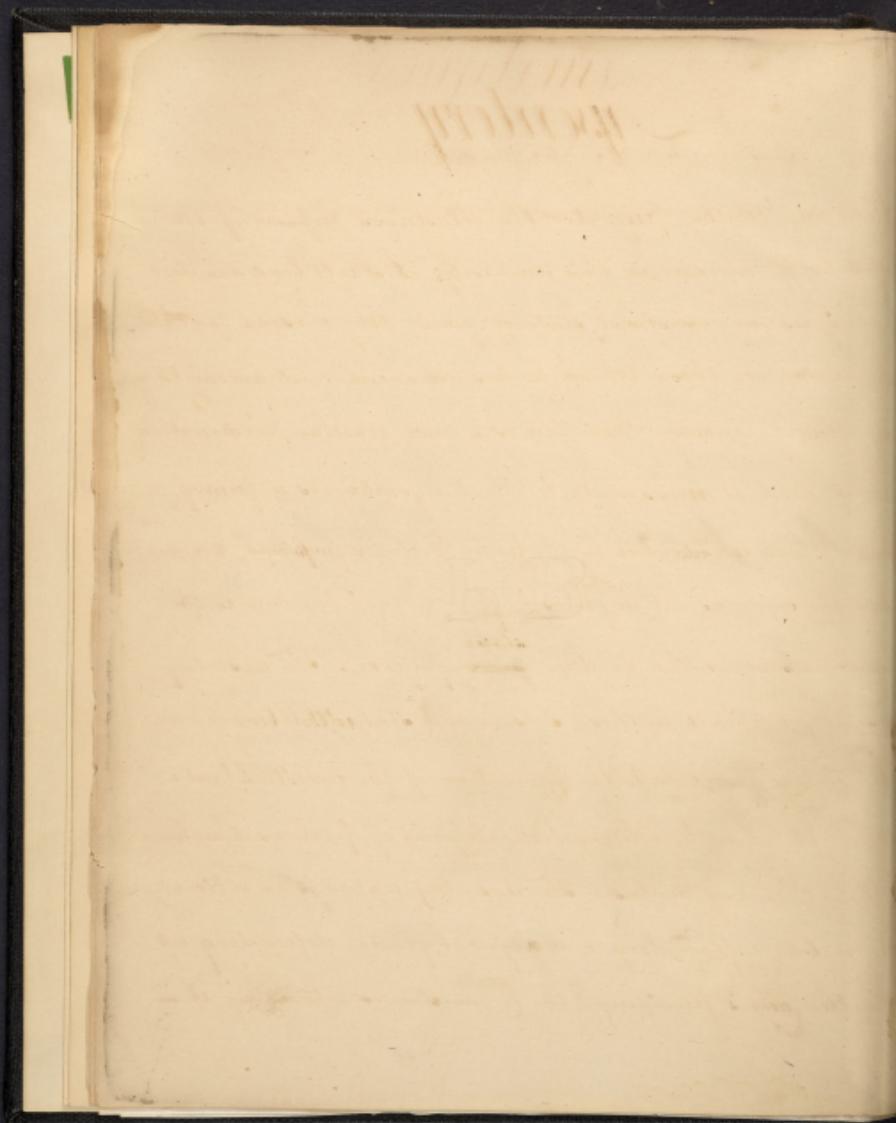
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Dysentery

With my worthy preceptor the illustrious professor of the institutions of medicine in this University; I shall consider dysentery as an intestinal state of fever; My reasons for this opinion are those which he has advanced and among them are the following. that fever is a unit whether produced by heat, cold, or miasmata. that dysentery is a form of fever, which is indicated by the pulse & other symptoms; appearing the same as are ^{other} forms of fever. & that the cure is the same as indicated in other ~~forms~~ ^{states} of fever. The dysentery usually appears in those seasons and states of the atmosphere which are favourable to the generation of the remittent & intermittent and the other intestinal forms of fever as diarrhoea cholico & cholera morbus. The dysentery appears in either a mild, inflammatory or malignant grade, depending upon the causes preceding & the circumstances attending it.

Symptoms.

The symptoms which characterise this form of disease are various and different. I will narrate some of them as mentioned by Authors & such as have come under my own notice ~~which~~ in the Country. It sometimes commences with costiveness & at others with a laxity of the bowels with all the symptoms of diarrhoea. "In most cases it commences with griping and frequent inclinations to go to stool." Nausea & vomiting sometimes occurs. The pulse is either synoeca, synochula, lymphus or typhoid. As this form of disease advances the symptoms enumerated increase in violence & unless they are subdued by the power of Medicine, the torture of the unhappy patient will soon be terminated by death. But this once formidable state of fever which swept away thousands, is now under the control of Medicine & the new principles in Medicine taught by Dr Rush has met the Hydra in its forming State & thus conquered ~~with~~ a disease which formerly was but too frequently fatal, in consequence of that

undue attachment to nosology, which invariably compells us to wait until it is completely evolved, its symptoms and diagnostics become evident, and then the duty of the Physician was, to pronounce the name & seat of the disease; sick in his nosological arrangement for the disease & its cure. And thus give Medicines which were ordered perhaps a number of years ago in a different country, climate and constitution, not paying any attention to the state of the system, grade or malignity of the present disease, as if the disease were as invariable in its characteristics as the Lion or the Oak. The experience of ages has taught us that disease changes with the atmosphere, climate, constitution & age of the patient, & that disease never appears twice with the same symptoms. Physicians have too late been taught this & by attending to Nosological arrangements have seen with the most poignant regret, their friends & relations die after all the *Materia medica* had been exhausted to no purpose. If the sword has slain its thousands I may safely assert that nosology has slain its ten of thousands - it has had its reign, error & ignorance may ride triumphant for a time. But truth & science will obtain their just superiority & regain their high station. - This happy evolution in medical science was fostered

ed in the Republic of our Country, and the enlightened Push under the auspices of genius and talents has promulgated taught theory and principles in medicine, which for Simplicity & truth were never equalled, they not only discard Nosology from the practice of Physicians, but they compell a Physician to be ever watchful of his patient's care, & like a guardian angel, ^{watch} the varying State of his System & pulse which he happily calls - "the Nosometer of the body, or is to the System, What the hands are to a Watch;" thus telling every movement within & shewing every deviation from health. - It is true there are some exceptions but these are rare - And when the pulse refuses to indicate the state of the System from Accidental circumstances, as diseased heart, insufficiency of surrounding muscles or a wrong direction of the radical artery, other parts of the body will perform a vicarious office as the eye, Tongue, Countenance &c. —

With regard to the pulse, it is to be observed that the pulse is a very delicate organ, and is easily affected by the mind and passions, heat and cold, and any sudden change in your animal frame, such as violent惊動,惊嚇, &c. will affect the pulse, and will make it irregular, & sometimes even stop it, and all

Discharge from the intestines.

They are various in their consistence, colour and nature. Sometimes
faeces are discharged in the form of balls called seyballa,
blood, blood & mucous the last sometimes with faecal mat-
ter, membrane of blood, lumps of fat, sometimes there is no
discharge upwards or downwards, which indicates the highest
grade & requires prompt & potent remedies which will be taken
notice of presently. Tenesmus frequently accompanies the discharge
or is a symptom. It is very distressing & is caused by "sey-
ballae, ulcers in the rectum, acrimony & a diseased contiguous
viscera as the bladder" &c. —

Appearances of Intestines after Death.

- 1st No marks of disease, owing to the grade of disease transcending the Inflammatory period. —
- 2nd Inflammation.
- 3rd Membrane
- 4th Pustules
- 5th Mucous
- 6th Tubercles
- 7th Gangrene

Diagnosis.

In a former part of this Essay, I have attempted to shew the fallacy of Nosology and all rules drawn from it. - I therefore hope I shall be excused for not mentioning any diagnostics. No form of disease can monopolize any pathognomonic sign as it is continually changing. A blind attachment to prejudice & error although supported by the first Physicians of the age, is highly injurious, in medical science. Where the health &c. of our fellow-citizens are at Stake, I shall therefore pass over this part of my Subject in Silence.

Prognosis.

In every State of fever, the Signs indicative of returning health or approaching death, are so various and uncertain that the most scientific & experienced physicians on prognostication of disease are frequently disappointed. — I hope it will be excusable in an inexperienced youth in not attempting any-

Remote Causes.

These are such as act directly on the alimentary canal & such as act indirectly through the medium of the system generally. To the first belong miasmata, it and heat appear to be the chief remote causes. They are also sometimes the exciting causes. When the atmosphere is heated and charged with the effluvia arising from marshes &c. entering the body - act very powerfully on the intestines. Whether it is by the miasmata causing an increased secretion ^{of the liver} & excretion and thus by its astringency in the intestines, cause, dysentery, I shall not determine. If it be so, the importance of that very important viscous will be much augmented. It has already been proved by Dr Rush that many forms of disease whose causes were formerly supposed to be different, to originate from a diseased state of the liver. And if this one be added it will add another powerfull argument in favour of the unity of disease. That dysentery sometimes proceeds from the causes acting primarily on the

the liver and producing disease is highly probable from dissec-
tion. Mr. Clark treating of the diseases of India mentions several
cases of dysentery which on dissection proved that the liver was
diseased. He in several cases believes the diseased state of the
liver was the cause of dysentery as will appear from the fol-
lowing quotations. After mentioning the appearances on dis-
section in the intestines he says "the liver was much smal-
ler than natural, being probably only a third part of its usual
size. It was also unusually pale, hard and unequal, but did
not contain any purulent matter. I am of opinion that the
obstructed state of the liver was probably the cause of the dys-
entery as well as the enlargement of the spleen & ascites.
At the same time the dysentery was undoubtedly the immediate
cause of death." In another place page 181. our author says
when speaking of the dissection of a patient who died of dys-
entery "There were several collections of matter in different parts
of the liver which could have had very little share in oc-
causing death. He never complained of pain in the hepatic
region." We also read in the same author page 91. of the
dissection of a dysenteric patient as follows "On the surface of
the liver there were several white coloured spots, evidently indicating
the presence of purulent matter, and when cut into a consider-

able quantity was discharged. From a consideration of this case,
I think we may justly infer that the obstructed state of the liver
was the cause of the affection in the bowels & consequently of Death.
From the consideration of these facts, I make no hesitation in af-
ferting that the diseased state of the liver sometimes produces dys-
entery. A vegetable diet has a tendency to induce this disease.
Cold is also one of the remote causes - Contagion has been sup-
posed to be the remote cause of dysentery, However plausible it may
appear, I think it is entirely unfounded. The effluvia arising
from the excretions especially the fæces of a dysenteric patient, may
be one of the exciting causes in producing this form of fever. I will not
deny - But that ~~has~~ ever acted as a remote cause without being
assisted by other causes either remote or exciting, I think quite
Improbable. As Marsh Miasmata ^{are} one of the most usual
remote causes of dysentery. It is reasonable to suppose those breath-
ing the same air and living on the same Aliments & drinks would
be attacked by the same form of fever. But this never will take
place unless there exist a similarity of Constitution & a predispo-
sition to the disease. It invading whole neighbourhoods & fam-
iles, I do not consider as any proof of its Contagious na-
ture

ture. The Intermittent & other forms of fever frequently perade
neighbourhoods & families, yet we do not call them contagious.
Many Individuals have been attacked by this form of fever af-
ter being exposed to the effluvia of a sick room — and many
others have not. When this was the case I should always infer
that a previous predisposition existed & the exciting cause, as
the effluvia from the excretions, ushered in the disease. So be-
lieve in the contagious nature of the dysentery would be attended
with the most dreadfull consequence. What attendant could
we procure for the patients, if they were hourly exposed to its
banfull attacks? The unhappy patient must suffer, languish & die.
See his friends depart & leave him to his fate. How inconsistent
with the dictates of humanity & how derogatory to the godlike
character of a physician. I cannot pass over this part of my
Subject, without mentioning another injurious effect of nosology
in ranking a certain number of the forms of fever under the
head of contagious. How repugnant to Christianity. When they
believe the form of fever to be contagious, the patient is deserted.
And hence the heart piercing cry from the sick room of a patient
attacked with malignant fever, "Don't leave me, Don't

leave me," valious must that heart be to sensibility & in animo
to the warm feelings of Christian love. Who could close his ears
against such heart-wounding appeals — — —

Predisposing cause,

Debility.

Exciting causes,

The exciting causes of this form of fever are the same as with other forms. From the numbers which are afflicted with it after being exposed to the effluvia evolved from the excretions of a dysenteric patient. I believe such effluvia is a highly exciting cause and from this occurring so often, there is no doubt, but ~~that~~ we may ascribe to it, the origin of the contagious nature of the dysentary.

Proximate cause.

It would be useless in me to enumerate all the proximate causes which have been assigned to dysentery - As a great number of them are consigned to that oblivion they so justly merit. Dr. Bullen believed it to be a spasm. That Spasm may occur I do not doubt. But that Spasm is a cause of dysentery is quite improbable - Dr. Rush believes Spasm is one of the primary forms of ~~cause~~ It is the effect, & not the cause, as well might we say Ulcers in the lungs, Spus in the Liver or Water in the brain to be the cause of Consumption, hepatitis or hydrocephalus internum.

Dr. Rush has taught Morbid Action to be the proximate cause, & considers the proximate cause & disease to be the same. Some opposition has been made to this opinion but upon what grounds I cannot understand. It appears to be a dispute merely about names, as those who are opposed to it, deny that the proximate cause can be the disease & the cause cannot be the effect. This controversy I will not decide, - But proceed to enquire what is meant by the proximate cause or what is the necessity for it. It I believe exists only in the

dea, a child of fancy & imaginary. The remote causes act
on the debilitated part of the system & by the exciting cause
brought into action disease, which disease I believe with Dr.
Rush to be morbid excitement, in the blood vessels. Dr. Rush
calls this the proximate cause & says it is disease. I cannot see
the propriety of a proximate cause without ^{the} all the exciting
causes also the proximate cause, as there has been more dispute
about the proximate cause of disease than I think it is entitled to.
I shall discard it, because I think it merely a name of no prac-
tical use thereby obviating that futile argument against the unity
of disease & morbid excitement, and say that the remote cause
acted upon the debilitated system which ~~is~~ brought into
action by the exciting causes, disease or morbid excitement,
which consists in the "partial and irregular operation of
disordered & debilitated nature". It is our duty to render this
partial & irregular operation, equal & regular, & restore na-
ture from disorder to ^{order} debility to strength, or in other words
to equalize the excitement & excitability, for their partial
actions constitutes disease. To do this ^{we} will consider the method

Method of Cure.

In entering upon the method of cure I wish in the first place to Observe, that no uniform mode of treatment can be recommended for any grade of disease. As every form of fever is continually changing, we must pay attention to the state of the System & pulse. With this view I shall mention those remedies recommended by Authors, & those which I have seen exhibited with the best advantage. And first of Blood letting. In the mild Inflammatory grade of this fever were the pulse is not much affected, bleeding is of little service. The blood Vessels of the Intestines being situated so remote from the general Circulation that Bleeding in the Inflammatory Stage is of very little service, unless carried to such extent as would endanger the General System of the patient, & debilitate it below the point of reaction. Thus being the case in the Inflammatory Stage it is our Intent, to obtain a Medicine which would reduce the Action of the blood Vessels of the Intestines, without much debilitating the General System. To obtain this end

newspaper cathartics have been found most efficacious—
And the one which has been found the best in the practice of
my former preceptor Dr. Inks is the

Specuanha.

Its virtues in curing the inflammatory stage of dysentery are
very great and recommends it to the attention of the Medi-
cal World. Dr. Inks has given it in every case which has
come under his care and with the happiest success— Its good
effect appears to arise from its power in allaying the action of
the blood vessels of the intestines. But in what manner it
produces this effect, I will not pretend to say, but leave it
to able and more scientific pens. We should suppose
reasoning a priori that other cathartics, as Glauber's Salts
Caster Oil &c. would have the same effect in reducing the ac-
tions, experience however & being thus tried in my preceptor
hands have taught me the fallacy of such an opinion,
invariably finding that their effect was not such as that

of the ipecacuanha which immediately stopped the proctys
of the disease. Dr. Junkt's favorite prescription is in the form of
pills of two or three grains if the stomach will bear it, ^{half} every ^{time}
untill a moderate evacuation is produced; keeping the patient
in bed promoting a perspiration. - When the dysentery is high-
ly inflammatory, blood letting must be used - and the ipecacuanha
joined with calomel is highly necessary, Demulcent & mai-
ginous drinks are to be given, in order to relieve the pain and
blunt the acrimony of the feces. When the Stomach refuses to
retain the ipecacuanha, it can be given in the form of injection
With good effect, and in confirmation of it, I will quote a few
lines from Mr. Clarke who says "The form of Injection which I
have found to answer best, has been thru drams of ipecacuanha
root, bruised and boiled in a quart to a pint of Water and
given as an injection at once." Also Starch Injections or -
Starch combined with ipecacuanha has been found to
answer very well in some cases. Emetic tartar, ^{Rhubarb}
~~and~~ have been given by some Physicians with success

but having never given them nor seen them prescribed I shall
pass them over; being contented with the one under consider-
ation. If the ipecacuanha should answer the same end in the
hands of other physicians as well as my preceptor - It will be of
great benefit to mankind. It is a plant of our own country &
can be obtained cheap which certainly is an object when at-
tending on the Indigent. After the Inflammatory action has been
reduced by the above depletion; the Chatto's Julep or opiate may be
given. If the Stomach will not retain them, they can be thrown up
the rectum. Blisters are highly useful in Translating Morbid excite-
ment from a more to a less vital part of the System. They should now
ever be applied until the System is reduced to some degree. They
should be applied to the Throats or armpits in preference to any other
part. The Manner of their acting I do not know unless by the Sympa-
thy of Continuity, which appears to be the most plausible & correct
theory of any I have heard. The above plan of cure has always ^{answer} agreed
with Dr. Jeales in the inflammatory Stage. But dysentery appears some-
times under so malignant a form that the System is prostrated as to forbids
kinds of depletion. Hore Bark, opium and cordials should

be administered truly as they are the only remedies which can
Save the patient.

Thus Gentlemen have I finished my Essay, It is Imperfect
from its brevity, my ill State of Health and want of time, these
reasons & my inexperience I hope will shield it from that just
criticism which no doubt it merits, Accept of my thanks for
your assiduity in teaching me while I was a Student & I am
particularly indebted to Professor Bartow who has acted
towards me as a friend, I hope in my future life, he will
still continue to be one.

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